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Recommended Citation

Ploskonka, Mitchell (2015) "Band of Bastards: Rhetorical Parallels and National Memory in Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day Speech, Patton's Speech to the Third Army, and Olivier's Henry V," *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference*: Vol. 8 , Article 4.

Available at: <http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc/vol8/iss1/4>

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Band of Bastards: Rhetorical Parallels and National Memory in Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day Speech, Patton's Speech to the Third Army, and Olivier's *Henry V*

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Henry's St. Crispin Day Speech in *Henry V* (4.3) is an oft-quoted, iconic example of motivational rhetoric. In World War II, Laurence Olivier's 1944 *Henry V* used the speech to stir British support, and it was also around this time that General George S. Patton was delivering his tour of speeches to the Third Army in Britain. In many ways, the two speeches are rhetorically alike. Given under similar circumstances, they contain thematic parallels that align the rhetoric of Olivier's Henry and Patton. Little previous scholarship exists exploring this connection, despite the fact that the two speeches mirror each other in rich and challenging ways. Both speeches bridge the gap between rank and power, and both manipulate memory in order to accomplish their motivational mission. The result is a pair of speeches that reveal distinct national attitudes, commenting specifically on Britain's long-term and America's short-term concept of memory. Examining the rhetorical patterns that make each speech so potent uncovers key differences that reveal how Olivier and Patton manipulate Shakespeare's text to fit the national and contextual sensibilities of World War II.

A great lover of literature, Patton absorbed writers like Shakespeare and incorporated their powerful themes into his military rhetoric. His daughter, Ruth Ellen, recalls her father standing in front of the mirror, practicing his "war face," and bellowing the "once more unto the breach" speech from *Henry V* (D'Este 817). While there is no direct evidence of Patton's reading the remainder of *Henry V*, it is clear that he was aware of the king's rhetorical power. Furthermore, Patton was a firm believer in reincarnation. He said he believed he was a former Roman general, and that upon dying, he was confident that he would assume the position of another military leader (322). Patton felt a connection with the past. He was an avid consumer of military history and literature, and staunchly believed that the past lived through him.

In 1944, in Britain, Patton gave his tour of speeches to the Third Army who were stationed overseas, poised for an invasion. In the same year, shortly after Patton concluded his tour, Olivier's film began screening. Reception was positive, and the film has since been recognized as a masterful blending of the screen and stage. Particularly, theatrical elements are maintained while filmic devices, such as score, add stylistic depth. Olivier delivered an unbreakably resolute performance as King Henry. *The Times* declared that Olivier's turn as Henry hit a "high, heroic note and never is there danger of a crack." Above all, the film is remembered for its rousing propagandistic patriotism yet frustratingly little has been written on the contextual importance of the film outside of passing acknowledgment of its motivational impact. Shakespearean film stalwart Anthony Davies describes the film as a "morale-boosting film for the Britain of 1944 and a fusion of historical event and myth and legend" (28). Sara Munson Deats describes Olivier's Henry as the fabled, charismatic, unshakeable leader; one very different from Branagh's version of his as the troubled, war-weary king.¹ Most analysis of Olivier's fabled film is of set design; as Deats observes: the "scenes are designed as a series of static tableaux reminiscent of medieval manuscript illuminations" (287).

The power of the film's motivation is its recollection of earlier triumphs. Olivier's film reminds its viewers of their place in Britain's history. He shows them their former glory so they will feel compelled to sustain that glory. Michael Brooke, writing for the British Film Institute, says the film "came too late in the Second World War to be a call to arms as such, but formed a powerful reminder of what Britain was defending." What they were defending was the legacy of Shakespeare and their place in the long-term British memory. Olivier's film operates in the same sphere of memory as Henry's speech in the Shakespearean text. The film shows its audience former feats the English have achieved, and successfully situates World War II in the same plane of memory established in Shakespeare. The Second World War becomes another moment in Britain's storied history. In a way, the film fulfills the promises made by Henry in his speech; the audiences in Britain were certainly remembering the feats achieved on St. Crispin's Day. The motivational power of the film is the

¹ Modern criticism is unable to separate Olivier's film from Branagh's 1989 homage-laden, though far different, adaptation. Still, analysis of Branagh's film exposes important differences in Olivier's.

suggestion that the war being fought carries the same weight, the same fabled myth shown in Olivier's film. Audiences attending Olivier's film varied; they weren't all soldiers, making the long-term memory myth-creation even more fitting. It explains what is at stake in the grand scheme of British history. The war is about continuing the success of King Henry at Agincourt, as well as the prestige of Shakespeare's words.

Masters of Military Rhetoric

Situationally, the two speeches parallel. They both are delivered by mythic leaders. Both are given before what is sure to be a bloody battle, and both would mark a turning point in their respective wars. For Henry, Agincourt shifts the Hundred Years' War in England's favor. For Patton, the Allied troops' invasion of France marks the largest military advance of the war. Consequently, there is a shared, understood fear of the unknown, fear of death, and fear of failure that undergirds these decisive situations. The speakers recognize that the soldiers involved are a part of a world-changing, war-altering effort. Such doubts among the soldiers become lucrative real estate for the leaders, who are aware of their soldiers' uneasiness and are able to manipulate them into loyal service.

Finally, theatricality is paramount to both speeches. Olivier's film is an adaptation of a play, one that highlights the text's theatrical elements and stays true to its theatrical roots. As such, the film is clearly a filmed play rather than a filmic reworking of a play. Thus, it situates the modern adaptation in the tradition of early modern England; it reminds the British audience where it, and *they*, come from. Similarly, Patton's tour of speeches was marked by anticipation and pageantry. He donned full regalia, including a riding crop that would be snapped at important moments. He stepped out of his Mercedes, and took the stage like an actor. He memorized his speech rather than reading his text (Brighton 260).² He took pleasure in making his audience laugh while also inspiring them. Like Olivier's Henry, Patton is aware of the theatricality and performativity of his speech, making the winning over of the audience a prime concern. For

² The exact number of speeches he delivered is unclear, and each one was, by degrees, different. It is believed that the famous iteration was formed by March, 1944, and he delivered it relatively unchanged until June of that year. The most well-known of the speeches was delivered the day before D-Day, though Patton would have been unaware of the exact date of the invasion. Some of his troops wrote down the speeches at different locations in Britain, leaving us a variety of versions. The text I use in this essay is a conflation designed by Brighton to include what he believes is the most accurate and encompassing version, though it is important to remember Patton's speech as an evolving, situational, *verbal* text.

Patton, his men had a heavy investment in the words that would carry them into battle. For Olivier, the film's audience consisted of non-soldiers. The film's theatricality plays to the theatre-going demographic while inspirationally reminding those in Britain why their men are at war.

Situational differences between the speeches offer further insight into their connection and our subsequent understanding of Henry and Patton's speeches. Although both men are monolithic presences at the time of their speeches, they represent very different archetypes. Henry is a king. He is a divinely inspired leader with generations of precedent for his ruling. Even though his father started the line, he recognizes his position as existing in the long line of monarchy, between its vast history and undoubted claim to the future. He holds a cosmic position. He is the head of England. All of the nation's power comes from divinity and rests within him. Patton's position, on the other hand, was determined by merit and military valor. Although he began his military career as a West Point-trained officer, his rise to the rank of general was achieved by work ethic, character, and military prowess (Brighton 40). Nothing was divinely given to Patton. He is sometimes aligned with the American *ethos* of the self-made man, even though his place in the Virginia Military Institute was almost guaranteed through his family line of relatives who fought in the Revolutionary, Mexican, and Civil Wars. At school, his lack of reading and writing skills were overshadowed by his determination, uniform appearance, and clear military promise (Blumenson 92). Patton certainly had security through his family legacy, but his success in school and later was only fully secured by his personal prestige. Prince Hal's apparent rise from the Boar's Head tavern to respected king narrows the gap between the two, but Henry's evolution was accomplished within the security of future power. So while both leaders have grown into their power by the time of their speeches, Henry's words emerge from a place within the long tradition of English monarchy while Patton's speech is delivered as a leader who climbed the necessary power ladder, even if aided by family connection. This key difference in position is crucial to understanding the two speeches' similar yet fascinatingly different approaches to the function and nature of memory.

Scholars have also noticed the rhetorical connection between Patton's and Henry's speeches, though their comments rarely go further than simple comparison. In his book *Patton, Montgomery, Rommel:*

Masters of War, Terry Brighton declares Patton's speech "the greatest motivational speech of the war and perhaps of all time, exceeding (in its morale boosting effect if not as literature) the words Shakespeare gave King Henry V at Agincourt" (260). Brighton may overstate the case, but his observation offers an astute connection between the two; they are both powerful motivators. Mark Taylor's "From Agincourt to Bastogne: George S. Patton and the Rhetoric of St. Crispin's Day" is the only article dedicated to the precise ways that the two speeches overlap rhetorically. Taylor focuses on the concept of future memories, noting that Henry urges his troops to consider how the battle will be remembered by future generations. Patton, Taylor continues, also comments on his soldier's future ability to pass their heroics on to younger generations. Both leaders develop rhetoric for oral contribution: If their men survive, they will receive a place in the oral tradition. Neither leader mentions a written history, suggesting that soldiers are free to embellish and adapt their stories if they survive. In both cases, they are allowing the creation of folk history. A pitfall in Taylor's analysis is his failure to separate Henry's eloquence and Patton's profanity as inherent differences in their speeches.

Rank, the Common Man, and Individual Memory

Taylor neglects the connection between Henry's pronominal choices, specific use of his soldiers' names with Patton's use of colloquial, barrack-speech as an example of both leaders bridging the gap between their rank and that of their soldiers. Patton's liberal use of profanity is an invitation for his soldiers; it was a way of lowering his speech to the vernacular of his men so that they could connect, listen, and be further motivated by his words. For the most part the technique worked. Officers under Patton have commented on the absolute silence shown by the men as Patton spoke (D'Este 601). The obscenities were taken humorously by the men, who appreciated Patton's use of "the language of the barracks" (Brighton 260). Patton wrote to a family member about criticism of his coarse language, saying that in order to convey the importance of an assignment he must "give it to them double dirty...it helps my men remember. You can't run an army without profanity, and it has to be eloquent profanity" (261).³ Indeed there is certain eloquence to profane-

³ The troops who disapproved of his profanity were a minority. Several transcripts contain notable and humorous censorship, changing "bullshit" to "baloney," "fucking" to "fornicating," etc. A more

laden statements such as, “we’re going through the enemy like shit through a tinhorn,” and “we’re going to murder those lousy Hun cocksuckers by the bushel-fucking-basket,” and obscene name-calling like “bilious bastards” and “son-of-a-goddamned-bitch” (265). Even in profanity, parallelism is important. Patton plays with language. He accentuates his message with similes, alliteration, and compound modifiers. His frequent inclusion of expletives creates humor while simultaneously adding stress to the rest of the phrase. In this way, Patton is able to raise morale by making the men laugh, while also retaining and furthering their attention to the mission. Even if this pugnacious and unpredictable personality caused Patton to be passed over to lead the invasion of northern Europe in 1944,⁴ his obscenities were successful in so far as they were designed to invite solidarity and motivation in his troops. In the end, it is a strategy designed to lower his diction to that of his men – common, coarse, and uneducated – and invite them to identify themselves with their leader.

King Henry also bridges the gap between the rank of his men and his position as their commander and king. The clearest evidence of this can be found in Henry’s use of the pronoun *we*. It is an inclusionary pronoun, bringing Henry and his men together while also separating them from those who are not present. Consider the most enduring passages: “we few, we happy few, we band of brothers” (4.3.60) and “And gentlemen in England now a-bed / Shall think themselves accursed they were not here, / And hold their manhoods cheap” (64-5). Pronominally, Henry juxtaposes their group of soldiers from the rest of England. He includes himself in “we few,” and then addresses “them” – those in England – thinking they should hold “their manhoods cheap.” Henry includes himself with his present company while also separating that company, morally as well as physically, from those who are not present. He creates parity as well as exclusivity.

famous dissenter of Patton’s profanity was General Omar Bradley, who personally objected to most of Patton’s traits, personally and professionally (D’Este 466-67).

⁴ The exact reasons that General Omar Bradley was chosen over Patton remains unclear, but the strongest evidence points to Eisenhower preferring a general with a calm demeanor and a consistent nature. While Eisenhower lauded Patton as an “aggressive corps-level combat commander,” he was hesitant to let such a monumental task rest in an unpredictable man’s hands. Others, including Patton, believed that he was passed over because of the famous “slapping incidents” that occurred during his Sicilian campaign, where he famously struck two soldiers who were hospitalized with “battle fatigue” (today known as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder). Patton believed they were shirking their combat duty by being patients without apparent physical injuries (Axelrod 121). News of the incidents spread among the troops, reached Eisenhower, and despite attempts to conceal it, the incidents became famous and public knowledge. At any rate, the incidents only confirmed Eisenhower’s reservations about an unpredictable Patton serving at such a command level (Blumenson 348).

Patton also creates exclusivity pronominally. He uses “you” to separate the soldiers he is talking to and those who are not present. He says, “then there’s one thing you men will be able to say when this war is over and you get back home” (Brighton 265). The “you” refers to every soldier present, both officers and enlisted men. Similar to Henry’s “we,” it is inclusionary. Patton’s use of “you” also excludes those who aren’t present, though it is unspoken. They will not enjoy the privilege, the *exclusivity* of telling their story.

While Patton lowers his language to the level of the barracks, he retains his powerful position for motivational purposes. He was already a war-hero at this point. Soldiers were excited to hear him speak, and his theatricality did not disappoint. Rhetorically, he separates himself from the rest of the men. He says the soldiers may tell their grandsons that “your granddaddy rode with the great Third Army and a son-of-a-goddamned-bitch named George Patton!” His is the only name that is used in the speech. He mentions the valor of other soldiers but does not offer their names or ranks. There is a separation between Patton and the rest. He finishes his speech by saying, “I’ll be proud to lead you wonderful guys in battle anytime, anywhere. That’s all” (Brighton 265). He recognizes his distinction as their leader. Hence, even though his use of “you” creates parity among the officers and enlisted men he is speaking to, it also keeps him separated from the troops themselves⁵. The reasons for this separation are surely complex and varied. Logistically, Patton was used as a decoy. He did not lead the invasion these men were involved in. It would be false to say “we” if he was not involved in the battle. Furthermore, he gave variations of the speech to several divisions in a short period of time. (A division consists of 10,000 to 25,000 men, too many to single out as individuals.) Finally, given his reputation and military exploits, there is a degree of comfort for his soldiers. They are commanded by an aggressive, proven leader. While Patton’s use of profanity connects him with his men, he also retains his position of power.

Henry does more to bridge the gap between his rank and that of his soldiers. In addition to referring to their group as “we,” he refers to himself as a common man. While speaking to the French herald he says, “we are but warriors for the working-day; / Our gayness and our guilt are all besmirch’d / With rainy marching in the painful field” (4.3.110-12). He

includes himself in the taxing activities of war. His language implies that he shares his soldiers' weariness. He also emphasizes that they are fighting for the common man, not acknowledging that they are fighting for his supposed right to the French throne. He manipulates the purpose of the mission to reflect the daily duties of the common man: the ability to work. Moreover, Henry uses individual names: "Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter, / Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester" (4.3.53-4). The inclusion of other names in proximity with his creates equality among the troops. While those he mentions are nobles, their names are nonetheless spoken with the king's. In fact, rather than lowering his own status to the common man, as he does when speaking to the Herald, in this moment he raises his troops up to his level. He names his position as king, but follows it with others, suggesting that it is not just the king that will be remembered. Furthermore, he names himself informally, referring to himself as "Harry." This rhetoric is masterful; he moves himself closer to the others. Even such a small sacrifice in status shows an openness and familiarity that recalls his tavern behavior the troops' memory of his former self. He leads them to believe that they are fighting, as brothers, for those left back in England. He simultaneously aggrandizes the men by putting their names on equal footing with his. Like Patton, he retains his title, not to separate himself from his men, but to highlight the position that he is raising them to. Similar to Patton, this rhetorical choice can be explained situationally. Unlike Patton, Henry is giving his speech to one group, and he is fighting directly alongside them. Finally, while Patton has already proven his worth as a military commander and is therefore able to offer comfort as a leader, Agincourt is the place that solidifies Henry's reputation; he has not earned it yet. This perhaps explains his motivation for bridging the gap more than Patton does.

The difference between Henry's and Patton's manipulation of rank and power in their speeches is indicative of British and American sensibilities regarding leaders and war. Henry's methods recognize, and thus reinforce, the power that comes with kingship. He aggrandizes his troops by including their names alongside his while also lowering himself to the level of his followers. Henry recognizes the mythic status he has been endowed with since his youth, and actively works against it, just as he practiced in the tavern. The fabled nature of his position, he decides, is not as effective as that of a leader seen as an equal. This is when Henry's early

experience with the lower classes best serves his kingly duties. Whether or not his princely experiences in the tavern were authentic or strategic, they gave him the wherewithal, at Agincourt, to connect with his common soldiers at their level. In this way, Henry temporarily interrupts the traditional, predetermined privileges of his rank to further his rhetorical strategy of inspiring his followers to act in England's interest.

Patton was not born a fabled leader; instead, he created his legend through merit, brilliance, and some would say a brutal fervor for war. His status was earned, and he served as an example of American grit. By using theatricality and lowering his language to the level of the officers and enlisted men, he simultaneously reminds them of where he began, and shows them where *they* can go. As much as his words are biographically problematic, Patton nonetheless represents the American archetype of pulling oneself up. By retaining his powerful position he is inviting his audience to celebrate his accomplishments. By using colloquial, vulgar language he illustrates that military prestige is also vulgar – it takes gritty valor – and that his men don't have to speak eloquently to achieve similar prestige; they also might be able to achieve it. The two leaders' varying degrees of raising and lowering status are reflective of their countries' respective attitudes towards its leaders. The English monarchy is a divinely held, mythic position that is endowed in its leader from birth. The American hero earns his place as a folk hero. In both cases, however, their colossal standing must be manipulated in front of their followers.

National Memory: Long-Term vs Short-Term

The crux of each speech is the speakers' use of memory as a motivational tool. Specifically, each leader evokes future memory: the stories the troops will be able to tell if they survive battle. The heart of Henry's argument rests in the ability to obtain honor and share it with future generations:

This day is called the feast of Crispian:
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
 Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
 He that shall live this day, and see old age,
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,

And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
 And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
 Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
 But he'll remember, with advantages,
 What feats he did that day. (4.3.40-51)

This is the payoff for being outnumbered. This is his soldiers' reward for wishing "not a man more." The passage immediately follows his permission for cowards to leave with money in their purses. For everyone who stays, he offers nothing but the satisfaction of future memory. Jonathon Baldo comments on the play's mediation of negative, short-term memory and the preference for long-term, nationalistic memory. At the time the play was being staged, a recent military loss in Calais and local memory towards Ireland were troublesome features of England's short-term memory (Baldo 134). Henry's speech is a rebuttal. It aligns the battle with a religious festival, securing its relation to the distant past. Furthermore, he extends memory into the distant future: "And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by, / From this day to the ending of the world" (4.3.57-8). The passage synthesizes past and future, appealing to England's religious tradition and extends cosmically to the end of the world. Henry also comments on the soldiers' memories' longevity: "yet all shall be forgot, / But he'll remember with advantages / What feats he did that day" (50-1). His men will lose their memories, as all old men do, but the memory of Agincourt will remain acutely present. Again, Henry retains the patriotic importance of the battle while also offering personal support for his troops. In both cases, it is a long-term memory. St. Crispin's Day becomes a fixed a fixed point on a memory plane that stretches deep into England's past and far into its future.

Patton also evokes past and future memory, but his is short-term. There is a finite period for memory:

Thirty years from now when you're sitting by your fireside with your grandson on your knee and he asks, 'What did you do in the great World War Two?' You won't have to cough and say, 'Well, your granddaddy shoveled shit in Louisiana.' No sir, you can look him straight in the eye and say 'Son, your granddaddy rode with the great

Third Army and a son-of-a-goddamned-bitch named George Patton!' (Brighton 265)

Patton's promise of future memory is limited, however arbitrarily, to thirty years. He does not suggest that they will be remembered to the end of the world; there is a single generation limit. Furthermore, he does not cite a specific battle, holiday, or event to commemorate the situation. He refers generally to the "great World War Two." Early in the speech he does refer to American history, saying, "that's why Americans have never lost and will never lose a war" (264). While it situates his troops in the entire history of the country, it reveals how recent that history was. The difference between Patton's speech and the beginning of America's first war is about 180 years. Henry calls upon Crispin and Crispinian, who were martyred in c. 285, about 1,200 years before the Battle of Agincourt (Meier 290). Patton establishes close boundaries: fewer than two hundred years of past and thirty years of future. Compared to Henry's ancient past and unknown future, Patton's use of memory operates on a short-term basis. While Henry fixes a specific point that travels indefinitely in both directions, Patton offers a series of points (the events of the war) on finite axes.

Like rank and power, the two speeches' approach to memory offers national perspective. Perhaps the clearest reason Patton evokes a short-term memory is that America simply does not have access to long-term recollection; it is a young country. By contrast, England has access to a vast history, one that has cemented its military importance. Henry uses this to place his battle in his nation's long narrative. He focuses his men's attention on the stability and longevity of the nation. England has survived until then and it will survive after. Patton, without access to such a deep past, relies on short-term success. He calls attention to the country's undefeated military record as motivation for his troops not to tarnish their budding prestige. Britain, in its storied history, has seen countless military losses, but its sustained presence offers confidence to Henry's men. Without such a history, Patton sees his country's short, victorious narrative as the foundation for continued success; he is appealing to a patriotism that is still carving out its history. In both cases there is perceived pressure. Henry's troops must fight to maintain their place in history while Patton's must fight to earn it. Britain is a seasoned veteran; America is the promising upstart. Using the same rhetorical framework, that of future

memory, both leaders are able to manipulate pressures of national memory.

Olivier, Patton, and the Legacy of St. Crispin's Day

As previously mentioned, Olivier's audience in 1944 probably represented the elite and those who were not fighting. Olivier's film at once reminds them of their past – the valor of Agincourt and the beauty of Shakespeare – while recapitulating age-old nationalism for a new generation. Meanwhile, Patton's manipulation of Henry's speech to reflect American memory can also be explained by considering the audience. Unlike patrons of the cinema, Patton's soldiers were on the brink of a large invasion. With battle looming, there was hardly time to consider their place in America's complete memory, however short it may be. Instead, Patton has them consider memory in their own lifetime. He focuses on events that would personally impact his men. In this way, Patton creates urgency by narrowing the focus to the individual level. Perhaps if he were giving his speech to non-military citizens, he would offer broad reasoning for supporting the war. But his job is to make his soldiers fight, so he calls upon their personal narratives rather than the narrative of their country's future.

The words Shakespeare gave Henry on St. Crispin's Day formed the rhetorical basis for Patton's speech to the Third Army. Together, these orations comprise two of the most successful, most fabled, military motivational speeches in history. They are grounded in the common man but cognizant of the speaker's powerful position. Henry elevates his soldiers while also lowering himself. Patton lowers only his language; he retains his already mythic status. Henry situates the events of Agincourt within the vast past and distant future of English memory. Without much past, Patton narrows his focus to the short-term, personal memories of his men. Both speeches represent the pinnacle of these leaders' military careers. In these moments, they cared only about motivating their men, something they objectively accomplished. In 1944, shortly after Patton ended his tour of speeches, Laurence Olivier's film appeared in British theatres. Its patriotic message and critical success further carried Shakespeare into World War II. It served much the same function as Patton's speech, only for a different audience. It gave the British people a visual reminder of their place in British recollection. Even though the rhetorical connections separate into unique remarks on their respective

countries, Henry's and Patton's speeches exist in tandem on the greater memory plane of the English language.

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